

The MANA Sunset

February 2015 edition



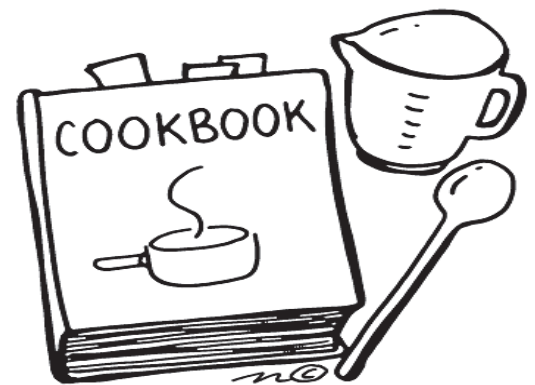
In This Edition:

Welcome to the February issue of The MANA Sunset! This edition of the MANA Sunset highlights some of MANA's most recent works. In particular, MANA recently received a touching message from a reader of Cherisa Allen's book, *Revelation, Restoration, Resignation*. The message is included in this issue for your viewing pleasure. As an author, you never know how your story can resonate with a reader. This personal message is a reminder of the power a writer holds in his/her fingertips.

Enjoy!

MANA Months

For the months of January and February, MANA features a deal on publishing plans that fall under the genres of Romance or Recipes! This is the perfect opportunity for all romance writers to see their romance novel published in the Valentines Day season. Also, if you've got a collection of tasty recipes you've been dying to compile, here's your chance! All publishing plans under the genres of Romance or Recipes will receive a 20% discount.



Reader's Response

A writer truly never knows the impact of his/her work. As humans, we relate and communicate based on shared experiences--this is what writing really does. It connects people and makes the world feel a whole lot less big and complicated. Cherisa Allen wrote *Revelation, Restoration, Resignation: A Woman's Story of Triumph for all Women* to reach out to other women who have experienced the same trials that she has. Upon purchasing Ms. Allen's book, Ms. Ferrari Green--a substitute teacher in the San Bernardino County Schools Alternative Education system--sent the following response to MarketingNewAuthors.com regarding the work's impact:

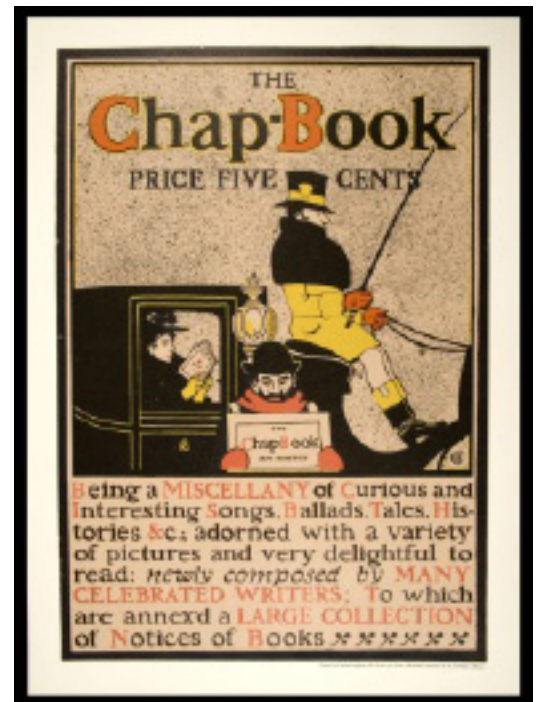
"I've been teaching a group of about 20 girls for the past couple of weeks. In that class of course there are typical lessons, but I feel life and female empowerment are just as important. I came across your book and downloaded what I thought was the e-book. I read the first chapter to my girls and they were hooked."

"At first they were very reluctant to hear once again the downfalls of substance abuse as the first chapter is titled. But within minutes I heard small laughs and comments like, "Yep, I've been there". The "Lesson Learned" at the end is perfect. We talked about the first chapter for about 45 minutes which is amazing, because these girls are conditioned not to talk as a survival mechanism on the streets. So to talk about anything for that length of time is beyond astonishing. As soon as we were done discussing they asked when could they read the next chapter."

Chapbooks

Chapbooks originated in the 14th century as very small, very inexpensive pamphlet-like books with thin covers. These mini-books typically contained poetry, tales of chivalry, short stories, or religious materials. Book sellers, called chapmen, traveled about selling their chapbooks to people of all social classes.

Today, these fun-sized chapbooks are making a comeback as a way for people to publish their first bits of writing, poetry--or anything really. Chapbooks are an appropriate page-length for publishing children's literature. MANA now offers this service to anyone interested. If you'd like more information about setting up a chapbook, contact marketingnewauthors.com.



Writer Feature-Thomas Manella

Please find attached a copy of Thomas Manella's piece "Fortune Tellers" for publication consideration. He has a B.A. in writing from St. Lawrence University and a Masters from St. John Fisher College, both in New York. Excerpts from his memoir, A Matter of Time, have most recently appeared in the 2014 issues of Blood and Thunder: Musings on the Art of Medicine, Jet Fuel Review, The Casserole, and South85 Journal. Currently, he teaches English and Environmental Literature in Naples, NY, where he live with his wife and sons around the corner from the house he grew up in.

Fortune Tellers

For my thirteenth birthday my parents gave me a new stereo. A slick JVC CD changer with multiple trays, dual cassette decks for dubbing, and a digital menu panel with lights in a rainbow of colors. It was beautiful. The speakers were allegedly powerful, too. The only downside came when I looked briefly into my crystal ball and saw that in two years, on his own thirteenth birthday, my brother Nicky would receive a stereo that was vastly superior due to inevitable advances in audio technology.

Dad was in my bedroom removing the sound system from its large box with great enthusiasm, recklessly snapping the Styrofoam packaging. White kernels littered the carpet and clung statically to his sweatshirt. In one swoop he had my dresser angled away from the wall and was plugging the stereo in.

"Nice," he said. The panel glowed invitingly and he stepped back to admire it.

For me, the anticipation of this moment had accumulated like a ball of snow rolling downhill all winter. The waiting, the desire, the glory of solitude in my sanctuary with grunge rock: Pearl Jam, Nirvana, Soundgarden. Dad had other ideas. Hunched beside the stereo, he chose a CD he had brought to christen the music machine. When I saw what he was doing, I was flabbergasted and assumed it was a Genesis album – this was the group we listened to on the rides from Naples to Rochester and back again during weekends with Dad. Dad, Nicky, me and so much to say there was nothing to say at all. Cruising the city streets in the black Acura Legend to Dick's Sporting Goods and Blockbuster video, Italian restaurants and Redwings games, three bachelors eating Pizza Hut for dinner and then again for breakfast, sprawled on the couch at Dad's apartment watching movies we had already seen together in the theater, simply enjoying one another's presence.

My parents divorced when I was seven, and, when they told Nicky and me, I immediately thought of the only other kid in my class whose parents were divorced. Jeremy Stopka was, to the best of my recollection, a cliché of poverty and neglect. His shirts were too baggy, his pants too short. Either he didn't know how to tie his shoes or he didn't care if they dangled onto the bathroom floor. After school he walked to the bowling alley where, he bragged, he consumed unlimited pizza and Coke – his teeth were spotted with black rot – and played video games while he waited for his mom to finish her shift at the shoe rental counter. He sat beside me in school and smelled like cigarettes and unwashed bed sheets, a tangle of sour breath and sallow skin. He left class for remedial help in math and reading. He couldn't throw a ball well. He didn't smile much. As immature as my judgments were about what type of person Jeremy was, he was not somebody I aspired to be like. Yet, sharing the commonality of divorced parents, I felt more like Jeremy than I ever imagined I could and less like my friends than I ever wanted to feel.

Thinking about my parents splitting up was like punching a bruise. I'm sure many children

Writer Feature (cont'd)

of divorce feel the way I felt. I didn't want anyone to tease me or think of me as different. Stupid. Sick. Neglected. I didn't want anyone to discover my new defect. I knew that, in this way, Nicky and I were different from all of our friends, so, to keep the divorce a secret, I chose to ignore it. I simply never acknowledged that Dad lived in another town. That I only stayed at his place a few times a year. That I was ten before I knew that he made amazing omelets. That he had girlfriends. I even ignored the fact that my attempts to keep the divorce a secret never fooled any of my friends. After enough time passes, some things are impossible to hide.

Once, after Dad brought Nicky and me back to Naples on a Sunday evening, the Acura broke down. He left it at the bottom of our street and walked back up the hill to the house. It was too late to call a tow truck, so he spent the night on the living room couch. The next day I came home from school, and there he was watching TV, still waiting for the tow truck, the only time in my life I would see him like this just after school.

"Hi, champ," he said when I walked in the room, "how was school today?" I loved him speaking those words from that couch.

Unlike when we spoke on the phone during the week and ended our conversations by saying, "I miss you and I love you," on those car rides back to Naples, we just watched the road and trees scroll by and listened to Phil Collins until it was time to hug goodbye and then say only, "I love you, too." Sometimes in the car Dad sang in a rangy voice. It was more imitation than authentic. I slumped in my seat because even when you're young you know whether or not your parents are rock stars. At the time I didn't realize he was messing with me, not even when he dropped us off at home and told mom about his performance on the ride, apparently proud of his clever histrionics.

"Your father used to be in a band," Mom told me after he left. "'Fortune Tellers' they were called." That impressed me a little and I tried to imagine him onstage.

"What instrument did he play?" I asked.

"None. He was the singer," she said with a rueful laugh. "They were pretty awful."

The CD tray slid open, and, into the new stereo, Dad placed the first album, a ceremony I had planned to orchestrate myself, but he caught my eye with a teenage twinkle in his own. I kept quiet. A bluesy guitar lick jumped at us. Then, drum kicks and the bass line. Dad twisted the volume knob to the max:

"'WHOA! The girl I love, she got long black wavy hair!'" he howled. I couldn't distinguish his voice from the stereo voice. The lead guitar bit again, the rhythm section filled, and Dad was leaning back on one leg, the other bent at the knee in the air and with his giant hands he picked out the notes of a vigorous air guitar solo. "'Her mother and father, Lordy, they sure don't, sure don't allow me there!'" He turned the volume down.

"Nice," he said, but I didn't know what to say, could never have predicted that routine.

"After classes finished on Friday afternoons," he continued, "I used to put my speakers in my dorm window and play that record as loudly as I could." In the most beautifully clichéd way, he appeared younger at that moment.

The stereo sat atop my dresser, in the top drawer of which was a wrinkled photograph of Dad holding me afloat in the high school swimming pool. I was four years old at the time. The picture, my go-to charm when I needed to see him at bedtime, seems to be one of the only

Writer Feature (cont'd)

concessions I allowed myself regarding an acknowledgement of the end of my parents' marriage. In that photo, in his arms, I felt so secure. Looking at it each night confirmed reality because looking at it meant he was not downstairs. Only alone in my bedroom did I feel less different, stupid, sick, neglected, less like Jeremy. After each glimpse, I buried the photo under my T-shirts at the back of the drawer. On the other side of my bedroom wall, I imagine Nicky, with his own picture, did the same. We never talked about it, though.

Suspended in the water, suspended in time: in that picture everything was okay. I could almost smell the chlorine, hear the lifeguard's whistle skip across the water and echo off the walls, feel Dad hold me tightly with one hand around my waist while reaching under water to snatch Nicky off the bottom and hand him back to Mom on the deck. I remember how, after that lesson, I chased Dad. The sun stretched over the crackling summer grass and wind whipped my damp hair, and I almost had him. Dad zigged one way and then another and I kept after his knees. The plastic bag holding our wet towels and trunks twisted and crinkled in his hand. I was chasing the sound and the chlorine smell that covered us, and I was chasing him. From the school pool, up the hill, across the soccer field. Dad looked back at me, just out of my reach, and I giggled and pumped my legs. My whole world was that sprint. A gust of wind pushed against me and I charged forward, reaching with my hands, but Dad was pulling away, a blur of denim I watched explode to the far side of the field. I stopped running and waited for him to come back to me. We walked the two blocks home in the fading light. I slept deeply, and, when I woke in the morning, while Nicky and Mom were still asleep, I went downstairs to the screen door just in time to look out and see Dad close the trunk of his car and back down the driveway. It was sunny and I didn't say a word and I knew my presence was unnoticed.

"Who was that?" I finally asked when the music stopped.

"Led Zeppelin," Dad said, drumming his fingers on the doorframe. With that he snapped his gum like a snare shot, left the CD in the stereo, and walked on out the door, whether to the past or the future, I could not tell.

Advice from MANA's Blog

MANA's blog offers advice for writers, as well as a space for writers to come together creatively. I've selected a segment from the blog, created and written by a college professor, for any person interested in publishing who hasn't taken that first step yet. So, are you ready to become a first-time author this year? If so:

1. **FEAR.** Family and friends are usually supportive of book-publishing efforts, but there are those who may joke, tease or scoff at a writer's plan to publish. Depending on the content of the manuscript, family and friends may even attempt to discourage the author from publishing it. Writers should be prepared for positive and negative reactions to their work. Not everyone will appreciate the book, but there will be others who may enjoy it.

2. **MONEY.** Some writers are still under the impression that it takes thousands of dollars to have a book published. It could take thousands of dollars depending on how it's published. Publishing does not have to be an expensive venture. Publishing a book is not as **COSTLY** as it once was because there are different publishing methods from which writers can choose. For instance, writers who are on a strict budget may choose Print On Demand which allows authors to print as many or as few books as they like at a cost that they can afford.

3. **PROMOTION.** Most writers are introverts by nature. It stands to reason that the idea of promoting their books to strangers does not excite them. Some authors would rather work with words instead of setting up social media pages (with their photos on them, too!), holding book signings, contacting book stores and other merchants to ask them if they would sell their books, and **SIGNING UP** with marketing companies for help in book promotions.



~Donna Tartt~

Quote of the Month





A Letter from the Editor: Avoiding Clichés

February is the month of St. Valentine's Day, a month that promises to have lots of sappy TV commercials and an inundation of romantically-clichéd marketing in grocery stores and malls. In honor of the cheesy romance novel genre, I've decided to make a list of the top three clichés to look for and avoid in your own writing. Though some clichés can be funny when used properly, for the most part, it's best to steer clear of them all together. Here are the top three clichés in writing:

- 1) Expressions that are overused, such as "Once upon a time..." "dead as a doorknob" or "quiet as a mouse." The wonderful thing about good writing is that it creates brand new phrases and expressions. That's what makes writing and language exciting--fresh uses of language and words. Create your own unique language, don't rely on clichés.
- 2) Dream stories. It's not so much a cliché as it is simply annoying, but never build up a story then have the entire sequence end with the protagonist waking up. Particularly with short stories, the driving focus of the plot is the story arc and the tension between characters. If the story is a dream, it sort of defeats the purpose of an actual story. I will counter this point by adding that there are some marvelous dream stories out there.
- 3) Conveniently-happy endings. I don't mean to insinuate that all stories should end on a dark note. However, a story is a delicate piece of fabric woven with different threads that all bring the story together. In my opinion, the best stories turn out to be different than I expected--different pieces of fabric than I expected. When writers conveniently tie up the loose ends with happy endings--reunited lovers, revenge rendered on a cheating spouse, etc.--it's a bit of a let down. Unfortunately, matters in life don't always have quick and easy solutions, so stories shouldn't either.

Happy Writing!